

Presidential Awards for Excellence in Microenterprise Development

Excellence in Program Delivery: Developing Entrepreneurial Skills

Detroit Entrepreneurship Institute, Inc.

Location:	Detroit, Michigan
Program Type:	Comprehensive business training, technical assistance and business support services
Service Area:	Detroit, Michigan
Target Market:	Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) recipients and low-income individuals
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The Detroit Entrepreneurship Institute, Inc. (DEI) provides a one-stop shop for aspiring microentrepreneurs. DEI is recognized for providing a uniquely comprehensive range of training, technical assistance and business support services targeted to welfare recipients and low-income individuals. DEI is a key welfare-to-work model to watch.

Started as a program of Wayne State University in 1990, DEI was incorporated as an independent non-profit organization in 1997. The mission of DEI is to “assure that low income individuals left out of the free enterprise system are enveloped into the economic mainstream through self-employment.” DEI’s comprehensive services, scale of activity, and high rate of business formation among its low-income, minority women clientele make it an industry leader.

DEI has demonstrated a strong and lasting commitment to serving the most needy clients. Fully 75% of its clients are recipients of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) subsidies and nearly 90% have incomes at or below 80% of the Detroit Metropolitan median family income. DEI also targets traditionally underserved people. Ninety-five percent (95%) of its clients are minorities; ninety-two percent (92%) are women, and fifty-eight percent (58%) are female heads of households.

DEI’s training program is tailored to people with little or no business experience. The training curriculum begins with a Self Assessment and concludes with an Employability Workshop. The curriculum covers a broad range of business and personal development topics including stress and time management, how to manage a checkbook, business bookkeeping, understanding business financial statements, importing and exporting products, developing a logo, computer basics, obtaining business insurance, and customer service. Since its inception, nearly 1,200 individuals have participated in DEI’s training program with more than 58% completing the 2 year curriculum. More than 60% of graduates -- or 400 clients -- have started their own businesses.

Given the significant challenges faced by its clientele in starting a successful business, DEI

provides comprehensive business support services. Clients can tap the expertise of other successful business owners who are assigned to work with them for two years by providing advice, training, and help in writing a business plan. DEI provides its clients with a no-cost, on-site business reference library, graphic design department, business computer center, and tax preparation service. DEI also provides its clients with access to a personal development counselor to help clients address non-business issues including domestic violence, substance abuse, affordable housing, and other household subsistence needs. While self-employment is the goal of DEI, it recognizes that many of its clients will need a stable source of income while they build their businesses. To that end, DEI offers employment services to help place clients in steady jobs.

DEI Customer Profile

Eternal Pleasures Catering

"You've got to be determined to create something, not go looking for a handout. This business has kept me off welfare, and now its a way of life for me."

-- Jacqueline Tucker, Owner
Eternal Pleasures Catering

Jacqueline Tucker is a divorced mother of three children who started a small catering business after completing her training at DEI. Jacqueline, who was on welfare for 10 years, was determined that there would be no second generation welfare recipients among her children. Jacqueline's three children have played an active role in her business which she named Eternal Pleasures after a Bible verse. Often the entire family helps with food preparation and display, clean up, loading the van, and billing. Although Tucker considered starting a business years ago, she spent most of her adulthood working for other people in a variety of jobs including more than a few positions in the food service industry.

Jacqueline believes that DEI changed how she viewed her career options. In addition to learning how to manage a business, she began to feel more confident as a citizen, mother and woman. She states that, after participating in the DEI program, she began to grow as a person. Jacqueline has been off welfare for more than five years now.

Jacqueline Tucker was one of DEI's first graduates and borrowers in 1991. She repaid her \$2,000 loan six months before it was due. As an entrepreneur, Jacqueline successfully demonstrates what DEI is designed to do -- to assist individuals in becoming economically self-sufficient through business ownership.